

COORDINATION FOR THE FUTURE

Background

The Coordination Issue Session was conducted in plenary with all 144 conference attendees seated at tables of eight. Prior to the conference, each attendee had received a read-ahead paper describing the coordination issues with the Marine Transportation System (MTS) expressed by Regional Listening Session attendees. At the Regional Listening Sessions, attendees generally attributed the lack of coordination to the absence of a national MTS plan or vision; the fragmentation of government responsibilities; the failure to view the MTS as a system; the failure to share information; and, unclear responsibilities and overlapping jurisdictions among government agencies. The read-ahead paper discussed the concepts of horizontal coordination at the local, regional, and national levels and vertical integration from the local level through the international level.

Alternatives for resolution from the Regional Listening Sessions were also presented in the paper. The alternatives included creating local/regional committees and a National Council on Marine Transportation. A draft Executive Order creating the National Council was included as part of the paper. Based on this background, conference participants were asked to:

- ◆ Identify a process for improved federal coordination and dialogue at all levels.
- ◆ Identify a process for improved public-private sector communication.
- ◆ Provide guidance on creating local/regional committees and a national council and commit to follow-on actions to create forums.
- ◆ Agree on core responsibilities and membership for local/regional committees and a national council, allowing flexibility for local needs.
- ◆ Identify ways to clarify multiple agency responsibilities for system users.

Outcomes

After an overview of existing Harbor Safety Committees, and a panel presentation on the need, value and benefits to a port community of a local coordinating structures, the attendees discussed function, membership, success factors, mechanisms for communication with local/national structures, and steps to make it happen. Participants were given work sheets with potential roles and membership for local and national committees as a starting point for their discussion.

The participants agreed going into the discussion that there was a need for coordination of MTS issues at the local/regional levels, the national level, and between the local and national levels. In general, participants agreed on the following:

The MTS needs leadership from the Federal Government in order to energize the public and private sectors into taking much needed action. A National Council of senior public and private sector officials should be created and chaired by the Secretary of Transportation.

- ◆ Active stakeholder participation is needed at all levels.
- ◆ Successful local committees should remain as currently configured and used as models for other areas that want to establish coordinating bodies.
- ◆ Local coordinating structure should be tailored to the needs of the local/regional port, without government intervention, but with their help.
- ◆ National Council should not dictate to the local committees but should facilitate and coordinate when requested.
- ◆ National Council should identify and eliminate barriers between agencies.

Specific roles identified for the local coordinating structure include:

- ◆ Identify problems, opportunities, and recommend solutions.
- ◆ Promote public awareness of the Marine Transportation System.
- ◆ Resolve local Marine Transportation System issues in the port, consistent with federal and international regulations.
- ◆ Represent local area/port in creating coalitions. Reach out to regional and national coordinating structures.
- ◆ Raise visibility of port issues (Federal, state, industry).
- ◆ Establish a means to access and refer issues to the National Council.

Specific roles identified for the national coordinating structure include:

- ◆ Provide national leadership and commitment to achieve the Marine Transportation System vision.
- ◆ Promote public awareness/education of the Marine Transportation System.
- ◆ Review, coordinate, and streamline federal structure/regulations that impact the MTS.

- ◆ Develop budget proposals for projects to improve the MTS.
- ◆ Advise, support and coordinate the development of a national MTS strategy, policy and goals.
- ◆ Coordinate with the international marine transportation community.
- ◆ Coordinate and support the planning of a national infrastructure.
- ◆ Identify and eliminate barriers between agencies.

Key criteria identified for the success of a local coordinating structure were: leadership; trust; commitment; achievable goals; build on accomplishments; awareness (broad representation); communication; credibility; honesty; clear mission; generally common objectives; willingness to honor the process and the outcomes; no Federal Advisory Committee Act restrictions; involvement and support of local government officials; and use a systematic approach with built-in success.

Key criteria identified for the success of a national coordinating structure were: right players at the table (high level); tier structure (right subgroups to address issue at hand); national leadership; strong participation from all stakeholders and accountability; link national to local/regional industry; identify and eliminate barriers to agency cooperation; coordinate technology development and deployment; bring national attention/visibility to MTS; funding; bipartisan support; national level leadership and commitment; clearly defined responsibilities by Congressional mandate/Executive Order; and support of congress, administration, and stakeholders.

Participants also discussed the working relationship between the national and local level coordinating structures including the types of issues that would benefit from local input; the best mechanism for obtaining local input and communicating among the different levels. Open lines of communication between the public and private sector was viewed as the key element of how the different levels would work together. Outreach on a regular basis to obtain feedback from stakeholders on emerging issues should drive the work plan on the local and national coordinating bodies. Participants also recommended a wide array of groups, public and private, that should be represented on both the local and the national coordinating structures.

A recurring theme throughout the Coordination Issue Session was that now is the time to act as there has been enough talk. Mr. Kurt Nagle, President of the American Association of Port Authorities presented the Coordination Session report to the senior leadership panel.